

Sūrah Muṭaffifīn

Central Theme and Relationship with the Preceding Sūrah

This *sūrah* is a supplement to Sūrah Infiṭār, the previous *sūrah*. Both have basically the same central theme. This *sūrah* is an elaboration of the division of the righteous and the defiant mentioned at the end of the previous *sūrah*. The only difference between the two *sūrahs* is the basis of reasoning. In the previous *sūrah*, the attributes of God that are prominent in man's physical being are adduced from. In this *sūrah*, the nature with which the Almighty has blessed a person is adduced from.

One can explain the basis of reasoning presented in this *sūrah* by saying that by his very nature man likes justice and what is good and dislikes injustice and what is evil. This difference between his likes and dislikes bears evidence that the Creator of this nature differentiates between justice and injustice or in other words between the just and the unjust. He cannot regard the two to be alike. If this was so, why would He have given man the ability to distinguish between good and evil.

The question now arises that if by nature a person likes good, then why does he perpetrate evil? The answer to this question is that he does not do evil because he likes it by nature; it is what is good that he likes by nature and it is just by being overwhelmed by other motives and inclinations that he commits evil while going against his nature. Had he by nature liked injustice and evil, he should have remained happy even when some other person was unjust to him; however, everyone can witness that this is not so: the very person who is dishonest in weighing to others cries out with anguish if others were dishonest with him.

In this *sūrah*, the Qur'ān while presenting this aspect of human nature as evidence has reminded us of a basic reality: when the Almighty Himself is just and He has created in human beings a liking for justice and goodness, it is essential that He bring forth a day in which He reward those who honour and value this light within their nature and punish those who do not do so.

At a number of places, the Qur'ān has adopted this style of reasoning in favour of the Day of Judgement and I have been explaining this all through. In this regard, readers can take a look at what I have written under the following verse of Sūrah Qiyāmah: بَلِّ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةً وَلَوْ (in fact, man himself is a witness upon his own self (٧٥: ١٤-١٥))

however much he may put up excuses, (75:14-15)).

Analysis of the Discourse

Following is the sequence of the discourse adopted:

Verses (1-6): An expression of regret on people who want that no one should be unjust to them but who themselves deal unjustly with others. It was only in accordance with justice that they should not like for others what they do not like for themselves. This attitude of theirs shows that they do not expect the Day of Judgement to come when people will be raised before their Lord.

Verses (7-17): A mention of the fate of the defiant who had denied reward and punishment and had spent their lives in disobedience to the Almighty.

Verses (18-28): A mention of the fate of those loyal to God who professed faith in the Hereafter and who spent their lives while being fearful of the Almighty.

Verses (29-36): A portrayal of the transformed state of affairs which every one will face one day: today the disbelievers do not care about anyone except their own selves and are making fun of the believers; however, on that day, the believers will be the joyous lot and will make fun of the disbelievers.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ (١) الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ (٢) وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ (٣) أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ (٤) لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٥) يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦) كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ (٧) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينُ (٨) كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (٩) وَيَلَى يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٠) الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (١١) وَمَا يُكْذَبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (١٢) إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣) كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤) كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ (١٥) ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ (١٦) ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (١٧) كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيَّينَ (١٨) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ (١٩) كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (٢٠) يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢١) إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (٢٢) عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ (٢٣) تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ (٢٤) يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَّخْتُومٍ (٢٥) خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (٢٦)

وَمِزَاجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ (٢٧) عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢٨) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ (٢٩) وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ (٣٠) وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ
انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (٣١) وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ (٣٢) وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ
حَافِظِينَ (٣٣) فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ (٣٤) عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ
(٣٥) هَلْ تُؤِتِبُ الْكُفَّارَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Woe be to those who weigh and measure less! Who exact full measure when they take from others, and when they measure or weigh for others give less than what is due. Do these people not think that they will be raised up one day for presence in a great day? On the day when men will rise to stand up before the Lord of the worlds. (1-6)

Certainly not! Indeed, the record of the disobedient shall be in the *sijjīn*. And what have you understood what the *sijjīn* is? A written register. Devastation shall be on that Day upon those who deny the Day of Retribution. Only they deny this Day who are unjust and usurp rights. When Our verses are recited to him, he says: “Tales of the ancients.” Certainly not! In fact, the rust of their deeds has settled on their hearts. Certainly not! On that Day, they shall surely be held away from their Lord. Then they shall be the ones who enter Hell. Then it shall be said to them: “This is what you have been denying.” (7-17)

Certainly not! Indeed, the record of the righteous shall be in the *‘illiyyīn*. And what do you understood what the *‘illiyyīn* is? A written register. In custody of the favoured ones. Indeed, the righteous shall be in bliss, reclining on thrones gazing around. The freshness of delight will reflect from their faces. Pure sealed wine shall be given to them to drink; the seal will be of musk. And it is for this thing, those who wish to strive, should strive with enthusiasm. And it will be mixed with *tasnīm*, a special spring on whose banks these favoured ones shall sit and drink. (18-28)

Those who remained sinners used to laugh at those who believed and used to make gestures through furtive glances when they passed them by. And when they would return to their people, they would return engrossed. And when they would see them, they would say: “Indeed, they are the strayed ones.” They were not sent to be their guardians. But today these believers will laugh at these disbelievers, reclining on thrones gazing around – Why! Have not the disbelievers been duly rewarded for what they did? (29-36)

Explanation

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ (١)¹

This sentence is not merely a statement of fact; curse and censure are also concealed in it. The word *طَفِيفٌ* refers to measuring and weighing less.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا اكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ (٢) وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ (٣)²

Mentioned here is a certain trait of people who weigh and measure less. It is evident from this mention that the objective is not merely to delineate this trait but to bring out a certain feature: a person is very sensitive and vigilant that others should weigh and measure correctly for him and would never like any dishonesty in this matter; however, when this very person weighs and measures for others he has no qualms in being dishonest. It is evident from this feature of a person that he is not devoid of the conception of justice and the fact that it must necessarily be administered; he knows full well that honesty should be observed in both cases at all costs; moreover, he fully knows that he should not like for others what he does not like for himself; when he becomes dishonest in such cases, then he in fact goes against his own nature purely being overwhelmed with selfishness. This of course is open injustice and a very mean thing.

It is evident from this discussion that the Creator has placed a barometer in a person to differentiate between oppression and justice and He has also put in him a disliking for the former and a liking for the latter. If even after this awareness, he commits oppression it is not because he is not able to distinguish between the two or because he is not aware whether oppression is in fact oppression; the real reason, as pointed out above, is because he is so overcome by some desire or emotion that he is unable to maintain a balance.

To elaborate the point discussed in these verses, one can say that when a thief steals something from someone's house, he would never want anyone to steal from his own house; similarly, a murderer who kills someone would never want that someone be after his life or that of his near ones. Similarly, an adulterer who violates the honour of a lady will never be happy if someone attacks the honour of his own wife. In fact, if all these thieves, murderers and adulterers are inquired to express their impartial opinion, they will even confess that there should be no place in the society for thieves, murderers and adulterers and other such

1. Woe be to those who weigh and measure less!

2. Who exact full measure when they take from others, and when they measure or weigh for others give less than what is due.

criminals. Only those people should be members of a society who protect the life, wealth and integrity of others the way they would desire the protection of their own life, wealth and integrity.

This attitude of a person and this aspect of his nature bears obvious evidence to the fact that neither does he regard good and evil to be alike nor is he satisfied with the equal treatment of the two. His impartial verdict is that both should be dealt with in a different manner. An obvious corollary of this is that the Almighty should bring about a day in which He deals with the righteous and the wrong-doers according to their deeds. If He does not do so, it would mean that the righteous and the wrong-doers are equal in spite of the fact that this would be against the nature endowed by the Creator to human beings. Here, in this verse, it is this human nature which is presented as evidence to prove the certitude of reward and punishment. By doing so, the Qur'ān has actually borne witness against the rejecters of the Day of Judgement who are bent upon denying the warnings of the Qur'ān regarding the Day of Judgement even though they are not able to deny this evidence of their own nature.

While explaining this verse, our exegetes have cited a narrative which says that the Anṣār tribe was plagued with the evil habit of weighing and measuring dishonestly; it was this situation that occasioned the revelation of this verse. However, firstly, this *sūrah* is Makkan and not Madīnan. Moreover, even if it is supposed that this bad habit was found in the Anṣār, then it could only have been to the extent that it was found in the Makkans. In fact, there was a much greater chance of it to be found in the Makkans because they were generally traders by profession whereas the real profession of the Anṣār was agriculture. The strongest point is that the purport of this verse is not meant to censure weighing and measuring less. It is, in fact, meant to state the fact that a person is fully capable of distinguishing justice from injustice, as is indicated earlier. If he does evil, he goes against the evidence borne by his nature to quench some base desire. This nature of a human being entails that a day come in which the righteous and the wicked are completely discriminated from one another. If a person denies such a day, then the only reason for this attitude is that he wants to evade facing reward and punishment even though this is a demand of his nature.

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ (٤) لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٥) يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦)³

These verses express wonder at the attitude adopted by the

3. Do these people not think that they will be raised up one day for presence in a great day? On the day when men will rise to stand up before the Lord of the worlds.

disbelievers. Everyone should be fearful of such a day since their own nature bears testimony to its advent. If a person does not have this fear in him, then it only means that he has turned a deaf ear to the calls of his own nature. The fact of the matter is that it will not be an ordinary day: it will be a great day, for people will rise on that day and will face the Creator of the worlds. They will be held accountable for their deeds and then rewarded or punished accordingly.

The arguments concealed in the expression رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ about the majesty and need of such a day and the verdicts given therein have been explained at many places in this *tafsīr*; readers are advised to refresh them in their minds in order to appreciate the stress in these words.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ (٧)⁴

The word كَلَّا (certainly not!) is meant to express the erroneous notion of the addressees mentioned above viz. having no fear of the advent of day of accountability and reward and punishment in which the righteous will be distinguished from the wrong-doers. On the contrary, they think that no such day will come and if ever it does, they will be blessed with more favours because of their own noble creed and their deities. These verses address them and refute their notions: they are told that they should not ruin their fate by becoming entangled in such childish views; on that day, the righteous and the wrong-doers will be as far apart from one another as the East and the West are. The record of the wrong-doers will be in the *sijjīn* (سِجِّين) while that of the righteous, as referred to in the subsequent verse, will be in the *'illiyūn*.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ (٨) كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ (٩)⁵

The word *sijjīn* (سِجِّين) in the previous verse is not in its literal meaning; it is used as a name and therefore the Qur'ān has itself explained what it refers to. Such names occur in the Qur'ān at a number of places, and at all places the Qur'ān has explained what they refer to. Some examples can be seen in Sūrah Dahr.⁶ Further ahead in this *sūrah*, the words *'illiyūn* and *tasnīm* are also similar examples. As explained earlier, it is the connotation of these words as terms which is implied here and not their literal meaning.

4. Certainly not! Indeed, the record of the disobedient shall be in the *sijjīn*.

5. And what have you understood what the *sijjīn* is? A written register.

6. For example *salsabīl* and *zanjabīl* mentioned in verses seventeen and eighteen and respectively of Sūrah Dahr.

The sentence وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ (and what have you understood what the *sijjīn* is?) is meant to express the awe and dread found in the word *sijjīn* (سِجِّين). The addressees should not regard it to be something ordinary; they should remember that he whose name or deeds are recorded in it shall be doomed.

The verse كِتَابٌ مَرْفُومٌ (a written register) states that it is a written record of the sinners. The qualification that this record is preserved in writing is meant to refer to the fact that there is no possibility of any error in it nor is there doubt in its certainty. Thus, *sijjīn* (سِجِّين) is actually the name of the register in which the record of all the deeds of the sinners is being preserved in writing; it is on the basis of this record that it will be decided on the Day of Judgement about the category of Hell in which a person will be thrown into. The word *sijjīn* (سِجِّين) is from سَجَنَ (*sijn*) which means “a jail”. It is because of this root meaning of the word that the name of the register which records the deeds of the sinners is called *sijjīn* (سِجِّين).

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٠) الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بَيُّومَ الدِّينِ (١١)⁷

The addressees are warned that they should not be deceived by the fact that if today no one is calling them to account, no one ever will; once the day of reward and punishment arrives, those who rejected it will be doomed. On that day, they will see that neither were any of their words and deeds left out from their record nor is there any way of being shielded from doom. When these sinners will see their record, they will cry out: مَالِ هَٰذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا (١٨:٤٩) (what a strange book this is; it has not left out any small or great thing in its record, (18:49)).

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (١٢)⁸

In this verse, the type of people which are the most active in denying the Day of Judgement are identified. The implication of the verse is that no person can dare deny this day who has even the slightest semblance of justice and mercy in him. Every person's own nature testifies to such a day of accountability and no external evidence is required for its proof. A person can just see its reflection in the mirror of his heart. However, people whose hearts are defiled by the rust of usurpation and transgression are unable to envision it.

I have already explained the meanings of اِعْتَدَاءَ (*i'tidā'*) and اِثْمَ (*ithm*) at various places in this *tafsīr*. The former refers to a person who seizes

7. Devastation shall be on that Day upon those who deny the Day of Retribution.

8. Only they deny this Day who are unjust and usurp rights.

the rights of others while the latter refers to a person who does not discharge the rights of others imposed on him. People who become used to usurping the rights of others or do not discharge the rights of others imposed on them, try to find out some way to evade reward and punishment so that their conscience is not pricked by their injustices mentioned in this verse.

I have indicated earlier that a person does not evade a reality merely because he could not find an argument in its support; he actually adopts this attitude because by accepting it his own desires and habits are adversely affected. As long as he does not want to accept a reality, he keeps on inventing excuses for himself however lame they may be. In Sūrah Qiyāmah, this attitude is referred to in the following words: *بَلِّ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْفَىٰ مَعَاذِيرُهُ* (٧٥: ١٤-١٥) (in fact, man himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses, (75:14-15)).

إِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣)⁹

Here, in this verse, the manners in which the disbelievers deny the Day of Judgement is highlighted: they refute a reality even though this attitude is against the calls of their conscience; they have no arguments for this denial. So instead of responding to reasoning through reasoning, they only express stubbornness and obduracy and humiliatingly regard the verses of God recited out to them to be tales of antiquity.

The word *آيَات* refers to the arguments and reasons which the Qur'ān was informing them to substantiate the Day of Judgement. These arguments are mentioned in the previous verses and also in the subsequent ones. There is also a mention of the nations which were destroyed as a result of denying the warnings of the Hereafter. They would deny these warnings by just saying a single sentence: "They are tales of olden times; none of them is worth paying heed to."

كَلَّا بَلِّ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤)¹⁰

In this verse, the Qur'ān has stressed that it is wrong of these foolish people to regard the verses of the Qur'ān as tales of antiquity. What it is informing them of are undeniable facts which are evidenced by the world around man and that within him as well by his intellect but such is the extent of the rust which has settled on their hearts that not even a speck of truth can pierce it.

The expression *مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ* refers to their deeds that we have

9. When Our verses are recited to him, he says: "Tales of the ancients."

10. Certainly not! In fact, the rust of their deeds has settled on their hearts.

alluded to above in verse twelve under *إِعْتِدَاء* (*i'tidā'*) and *إِثْم* (*ithm*) about which the Qur'ān has testified that the person who perpetrates these always tries to find an excuse to deny reward and punishment.

Mentioned in *كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ* is the practice of God I have alluded to at various places in the Qur'ān: if a person honours and values the arguments the Almighty has ingrained in human nature and uses the faculty of intellect He has given him, these things will be of benefit to him. However, if he does not use these things and instead starts following his base desires, then gradually the rust of his misdeeds begins to settle on these faculties and slowly engulfs them to the extent that nothing is able to make its way into them.

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ (١٥)¹¹

This verse refutes a baseless desire of the disbelievers: if ever the Hereafter is to come, they will be blessed with position and status there too the way they have been here; on the contrary, they will be punished for keeping the eyes of their hearts and minds shut; this punishment will be that they will be held away from their Lord, which in other words means that they will be deprived of His blessings and favours and of observing Him; they will not even get the chance to plead with their Lord.

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ (١٦) *ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ* (١٧)¹²

The repetition of the word *ثُمَّ* in these verses shows that they would be told these things in an emphatic manner and the purpose would be to humiliate them. They shall taste the consequences of what they had been vehemently denying in the previous world.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ (١٨)¹³

The word *كَلَّا* (certainly not!) is meant to dispel the false notion of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement the way it is in verse seven which is that the righteous and the wrong-doers will be equal; just as there will be a specific register for the wrong-doers, there will a specific register for the righteous. The latter's record of deeds will be in the *'illiyyūn*.

11. Certainly not! On that Day, they shall surely be held away from their Lord.

12. Then they shall be the ones who enter Hell. Then it shall be said to them: "This is what you have been denying."

13. Certainly not! Indeed, the record of the righteous shall be in the *'illiyyūn*.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عَلَيُّونَ (١٩)¹⁴

Just as in an earlier verse, this style is adopted to mention *sijjīn* in order to strike awe and fear, here this very style is adopted to convey the grandeur and magnificence of ‘*illiyyūn*. The implication is that how can one imagine its splendour in this world: it is a register of the exalted ones in which there will be a record of their deeds.

كِتَابٌ مَرْفُومٌ (٢٠) يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢١)¹⁵

Since the word ‘*illiyyūn* is not used in its literal sense but used as a term, the verse explains what it refers to: it is a record which contains each and every detail and it is in the custody of exalted angels.

Another meaning of يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ can be that since this record would only be for the favoured ones, only they would be able to come and see it; no one else would have access to it. Verse twenty eight mentions the favoured ones.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (٢٢) عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ (٢٣)¹⁶

These verses mention the favour the righteous will enjoy. I have already explained the expression فِي نَعِيمٍ in this *tafsīr*: it refers to the fact that blessings will engulf the believers from all sides. Wherever they are able to turn their gazes, they will find favours and blessings around them.

Consider next the verse: عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ (reclining on thrones gazing around). In an earlier verse, it is stated about the wrong-doers: كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ (certainly not! on that Day, they shall surely be held away from their Lord.) Here, in this verse, it is stated that the righteous, on the contrary, will recline on thrones and witness the favour and blessings of God and observe His grandeur and various manifestations. Further ahead in the *sūrah*, it is also explained that while sitting on thrones they will also be shown the fate of their enemies. The relevant verses read عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ هَلْ تُؤْثَبُ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦-٣٥) (reclining on thrones gazing around -- why! have not the disbelievers been duly rewarded for what they did? ((35-36)

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ (٢٤)¹⁷

The word نَضْرَةٌ refers to freshness and bloom that reflects on the faces

14. And what have you understood what the ‘illiyyūn is?

15. A written register. In custody of the favoured ones.

16. Indeed, the righteous shall be in bliss, reclining on thrones gazing around.

17. The freshness of delight will reflect from their faces.

of those who are engulfed with favours from all sides. Every one who sees these people will witness this freshness on their faces.

يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ (٢٥) خَتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (٢٦)¹⁸

Among these favours, one is mentioned as an example: pure wine will be given to them as a drink. This wine will be sealed with musk and it will be opened for them.

Obviously, these few features of wine are mentioned to give a general concept of this wine. Only those people will have an idea of its actual taste and characteristics who will get the opportunity to drink it. It is emphasized that to be able to be in a position to drink this wine is what all efforts should be directed at. This is not only an exhortation for the believers, it is also a sarcastic remark on people who are slaves of this world: all their efforts are expended to earn the transient pleasures of this world and there is no one to desire things that should really be desired.

وَمِرْأَجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ (٢٧) عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢٨)¹⁹

The word مِرْأَج refers to a liquid which is mixed with alcohol to increase its serene effects or to make it more moderate.

The word عَيْنًا is declined in the accusative because of specification (*naṣb ‘ala al-ikhtiṣāṣ*) and the particle بِهَا is an adverb of place. I have already explained this style in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dahr (76:6). The most appropriate place to drink wine is on a river bank. The wretched wine of this world is drunk wherever and in whatever form those fond of it are able to lay their hands on it; however, in the Hereafter, pure wine will be drunk by the favoured ones of God and the etiquette of this consumption has its own unique norms.

Our exegetes have not been able to determine the true connotation of the particle بِ. So either they have not discussed it or have erroneously interpreted it. The relevant expression is generally translated as: “They drink from it.” However, this translation is absolutely meaningless. If this is understood to mean that they drink from this fountain, then this has already been clearly expressed in مِرْأَجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ. So why should it be repeated in a very vague manner. It may be worth noting that in eloquent Arabic, it is very customary for the particle بِ to connote an adverb of

18. Pure sealed wine shall be given to them to drink; the seal will be of musk. And it is for this thing that those who wish to strive, should strive with enthusiasm.

19. And it will be mixed with *tasnīm*, a special spring on whose banks these favoured ones shall sit and drink.

place (ẓarf). In particular, in such instances, there is no other possibility than to interpret it in this manner.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ (٢٩)²⁰

This is a portrayal of the reversal of situation which will take place when the results of the deeds of the sinners and the righteous will be declared. This verse depicts what poor Muslims had to go through in this world at the hands of the conceited rich.

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ (٣٠)²¹

This can refer both to the fact that when these believers passed by them or when the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh passed by the Muslims, they would wink at one another and thereby hurt them in this fashion. It is evident that the hurt caused by the stare is much greater than the wound inflicted by the sword and the spear. The stare is a special weapon of humiliating and debasing people. *Inshallāh* I will discuss some aspects of this in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Humazah.

وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (٣١)²²

The implication is that when they return to their people after misbehaving with the believers they return engrossed as if they had achieved some great success. This is in fact a reference to their meanness: instead of feeling ashamed on their misbehaviour, they would boast before their household how they disgraced others. In Sūrah Qiyāmah, this aspect is mentioned thus: وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ثُمَّ دَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّى (٧٥: ٣٢-٣٣) (he denied the truth and, turning his back, went to his kinsfolk elated with pride, (75:32-33)).

Here one should keep in mind a characteristic of the believers mentioned in the Qur'ān: they would always spend their lives among their family in a very cautious manner so that any attitude of theirs should not give a wrong lesson to others. For this would lead both them and those influenced by them in such a manner to doom in the Hereafter. On the contrary, when these mischievous people which the verse mentions would go to their family after harassing the believers, they would boastfully narrate their pranks so that their next generation also is led to follow their evil ways.

20. Those who remained sinners used to laugh at those who believed.

21. And used to make gestures through furtive glances when they passed them by.

22. And when they would return to their people, they would return engrossed.

وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ (٣٢)²³

The arrogant leadership of the Quraysh would also try to make sure that no one should display a positive attitude in any form towards the believers. Therefore, whenever they would see them, they would try to convince other people that these believers have totally gone astray because they are the enemies of their ancestral religion and regard all others except themselves as the fuel of Hell. It should be kept in mind that many people were positively influenced by seeing the deep roots of the belief in the Hereafter in the Muslims. The Quraysh tried to counter this by trying to prove to such people that these Muslims are irreligious people who are deep in error. At various places in this *tafsīr*, I have already alluded to the arguments which they fabricated to support this scheme of theirs.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ (٣٣)²⁴

Generally people have understood this verse to mean that these disbelievers were not deputed as the guardians and teachers over Muslims that they may regard them as a strayed lot and censure their beliefs and deeds. In my opinion, this sentence is actually a part of the words uttered by the disbelievers. The complete discourse will be something like this: When they would see the Muslims, they would remark that these Muslims are deviants from the straight path; they regard their deeds [ie of the disbelievers] to be polytheistic and mere disbelief although these Muslims have not been deputed as guardians over them that they object to every deed of theirs and take upon themselves to reform them [ie the disbelievers].”

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ (٣٤)²⁵

After a portrayal of the attitude adopted by the disbelievers, this verse now mentions the reversal of fortunes which will take place on the Day of Judgement. In this world, it was the disbelievers who would laugh at the believers; but on that day, it would be the other way round. This making fun by the believers would be in line with justice: when the believers had communicated the truth to them to the extent that they were left with no excuse to deny it and they still did not mend their ways

23. And when they would see them, they would say: Indeed, they are the strayed ones.

24. They were not sent to be their guardians.

25. But today these believers will laugh at these disbelievers.

and on the contrary regarded the believers to be criminals, then they are only worthy of not being shown any sympathy.

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ (٣٥)²⁶

The implication of this verse is that just as the believers would be able to observe the favours and blessings of God while merely being seated on their thrones, they would also while sitting there be able to peep into Hell to see what the disbelievers are passing through; in fact, they would even be able to question them as is specified elsewhere in the Qur'ān.

هَلْ تُؤْتَوْنَ الْكَفَّارَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)²⁷

After receiving all these favours, the believers would be asked the question mentioned in this verse merely to receive confirmation from them.

The expression مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ also includes the misbehaviour of the disbelievers mentioned earlier.

With these lines, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* comes to its completion. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى فَضْلِهِ وَإِحْسَانِهِ (so gratitude be to God for his blessings and favours).

Raḥmānābād,

14th August 1979 AD,

20th Ramadān al-Mubārak, 1399 AH

26. Reclining on thrones gazing around.

27. – Why! Have not the disbelievers been duly rewarded for what they did?